GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4520
ANSWERED ON:22.08.2001
UN CONFERENCE ON RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA
PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the United Nations has convened Second World Conference on Racism and Xenophobia at Durban in September, 2001;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether various Preparatory Conferences took place in Nepal, Tehran and Geneva;

(d) if so, persons who represented the Government view point in the said Conferences;

(e) the number of NGOs` representatives selected and deputed by the Government to attend the above Conferences;

(f) whether the Union Government have not permitted discussions regarding caste-based discrimination;

(g) if so, the details thereof; and

(h) the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a) & (b) No, Sir. The second World Conference on the subject took place in 1983. The third World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance is being convened in Durban, from August 31-September 7, 2001.

(c) The Preparatory Committee has had three meetings in Geneva. The regional preparatory meeting of the Asia Group took place in Tehran, from 19th - 21st February, 2001. No preparatory meeting took place in Nepal.

(d) The Government was represented at these meetings by officers from the Ministry of External Affairs, Permanent Mission of India in Geneva, and the Embassy of India in Tehran.

(e) No NGO representatives were deputed by the Government to attend the inter-governmental meetings in Geneva and Tehran.

(f), (g) & (h) In December, 2000, Prime Minister set up a National Committee under the Chairmanship of the Minister of External Affairs, to aid India`s participation in the World Conference, and to ensure a nationwide discussion on the issues involved. The Committee held two sessions - at New Delhi in February, 2001, and at Hyderabad in June, 2001. At its second session in Hyderabad, the Committee heard presentations by around fifty NGOs, several of whom advocated the inclusion of caste-based discrimination on the agenda of the World Conference. They argued that, despite constitutional and legal safeguards against such discrimination, and affirmative action by Government, discrimination continues to exist at the social level. However, the Committee concluded that, while there was a need to strengthen national structures and institutions to ensure a more effective implementation of the constitutional and legal provisions as well as the Government`s affirmative action programmes, this is not a matter for any international initiative or intervention. The Government have accepted the Committee`s considered recommendation that it would not be appropriate to include this issue on the agenda of the World Conference, and intend to act accordingly.